

LIFE FLIGHT

More Than Just A Helicopter



"I'm convinced Life Flight saved my life," says Sharon Fisher. She should know since she had been a victim of a traffic accident which left her with two broken legs and a fractured pelvic bone.

Some have been buried under tons of snow. Others have been trapped in overturned automobiles, lost in Utah's western deserts and stranded on mountain peaks. Still more have been transported from rural hospitals and surrounding states to medical centers equipped to handle sophisticated health problems.

Regardless of their location and medical condition, these people have had one common need — immediate medical care.

Yet the same rugged mountains and weather conditions which contribute to many life-threatening situations often prevent emergency personnel from quickly reaching these victims.

That's no longer true — thanks to Life Flight.

Life Flight is LDS Hospital's 24-hour emergency helicopter and airplane transport service. Now approaching its sixth anniversary, Life Flight was started "because research shows that even a few minutes delay in receiving prompt medical care can mean the difference between life and death," explains Dr. Terry P. Clemmer, director of critical care medicine.

That promise was first kept on July 17, 1978, the day Life Flight began operating.

The initial request for Life Flight's help came at 10:52 that summer morning. Within minutes, the flight crew was on its way to Holden, Utah, to rescue a man severely injured in a farming accident.

Later, as the farmer was being wheeled into the hospital's Emergency Department, a second call for assistance was received. This time, Life Flight flew to Price, Utah, to transport a woman suffering serious gastrointestinal bleeding.

"I'm convinced Life Flight saved my life," says Sharon Fisher. Mrs. Fisher should know... she was a victim of a traffic accident which left her with two broken legs and fractured pelvic bone.

The Murray, Utah, resident was directing traffic while her husband moved a construction truck across a highway when she was struck by a car. Because of her serious injuries, paramedics on the scene quickly called for Life Flight.

"I was pretty banged up and may not have survived if I'd been moved by ambulance," Mrs. Fisher adds.

The same comment is true for many of the more than 2,600 patients transported by Life

Although the majority of patients transported by Life Flight are flown to LDS Hospital, a large number of regional medical facilities have also come to rely on this 24-hour emergency service.

Since Life Flight flew its first mission in July 1978, the helicopter and airplane have transported patients to these and other hospitals located throughout Utah, Idaho, Montana, Nevada and Wyoming:

Primary Children's Medical Center
Veterans Administration Hospital
Holy Cross Hospital
University of Utah Medical Center
Utah Valley Hospital
McKay-Dee Hospital Center
Cottonwood Hospital Medical Center
St. Mark's Hospital
St. Benedict's Hospital
Hill Air Force Base Hospital
American Fork Hospital
Grand Junction Hospital
Payson Hospital
Brigham City Hospital
Davis North Medical Center
Uintah County Hospital
Logan Community Hospital
Lakeview Hospital
Altamont Hospital
Valley West Hospital
Sevier Valley Hospital
Bear River Hospital

Flight during the past five and one-half years.

These victims have ranged in age from a few months to more than 70 years old. They live in communities scattered throughout the Intermountain region.

Of course not all of Life Flight's transports have come from accident scenes. Hundreds of patients have also been moved from community health centers to larger hospitals better equipped to handle serious medical conditions.

"That's another important advantage of utilizing Life Flight," notes Dr. Frank Thomas, the program's medical director. "Many physicians practicing in community hospitals can't accompany their patients to another institution. Life Flight allows them to remain where they're needed and still consult with our critical care specialists before, during and after the transport.

"The same advantage holds true for smaller communities whose only ambulance formerly was used to move a patient to another hospital," Dr. Thomas adds. Today, Life Flight can transport these patients quickly, efficiently and safely.

LDSH's emergency program uses a jet-powered Allouette 316B helicopter specifically designed for long distance, high altitude flying. The craft can carry a pilot, nurse, paramedic and two patients at speeds up to 120 miles per hour.

This "airborne intensive care unit" is outfitted with cardiac monitoring and defibrillation equipment, oxygen, suction, ventilation supplies, intravenous fluids, emergency medications, as well as splinting and traction materials.

An advanced communication system provides verbal contact between hospitals, law enforcement agencies, U.S. Forest and Park services, statewide dispatching agencies and other emergency medical personnel.

Life Flight also operates a fixed-wing service for patients located more than 135 miles